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*Uplands of Ancient Sicily and Calabria: The Archaeology of Landscape Revisited.* Edited by Matthew Fitzjohn. 2007. London: Accordia Research Institute, University of London. Accordia Specialist Series on Italy, Volume 13. pp. 237. ISBN 978 1 873415 32 0

This book presents the methods and preliminary results of six Anglo-American-Sicilian archaeological landscape projects undertaken in the uplands of Sicily and Calabria: the Bova Marina Archaeological Project, the Gornalunga and Margi Valleys Survey, the Upper Simeto Valley Project, the Troina Project, fieldwork at Polizzello, and the Salemi Project. Highlights are Foxhall *et al.*'s clear summary of a thoughtfully conceived archaeological survey and excavation project combining the coastal lowlands and mountainous uplands of Southern Calabria; Ayala and Fitzjohn's detailed evaluation of the methodology and results of the Troina Survey in terms of the preservation and visibility of upland archaeological sites and soils linked to particular (albeit undated) soil erosion processes; and Lucy Walker's valuable synthesis of published literature on the political, ethnic and, to a lesser extent, economic history of Troina's elite and their landownership, which complements some of the patterns identified by the related archaeological survey.

As far as the uplands are concerned, a number of key points and themes emerge across the Introduction and 13 chapters. First, archaeologists need to adapt their standard Mediterranean field-survey methods (largely developed in the lowlands) to the often steeply sloping and rugged terrain of the uplands. Second, intensive archaeological surveys in the uplands have been successful in identifying large numbers of new archaeological sites and in relating them to changing patterns of occupation in different altitudinal zones. Third, natural and anthropogenic factors have led to some major episodes of erosion and landscape change on upland plateaux and slopes, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with a consequent impact on the preservation and visibility of archaeological material today. Fourth, archaeologists are now thinking in terms of the connectivity of upland communities, with each other and with coastal lowland communities and territories, and the active role played by them in the political and economic dynamics of the wider Mediterranean – an archaeological approach to the cultural landscape of Sicily described by Leone *et al.* (p. 50) as an 'inside-out' one as opposed to the traditional 'outside-in' perspective. For example, what Walker's historical research on the highest town in Sicily reveals is, 'a world which was intimately affected by, rather than isolated from, contemporary events; and also a cultural environment with its own social and economic energy which was also very much influenced by, and linked to, the wider context of Sicilian affairs.' (p. 117). Fifth, the uplands offered human groups a distinct set of cultural resources: relatively plentiful water from springs and streams (compared to the semi-arid coastal strip); small pockets of fairly level ground appropriate for productive agriculture; extensive forests, hunting grounds and seasonal pastures; effective lines of communication along major river valleys and ridges; and prominent site locations affording protection, commanding views, and ritual and religious potentiality. Not that the hazards of upland environments should be ignored, the most striking example being the risk posed to agricultural land by flank eruptions of the slopes of Etna, although, as Leone *et al.* note, traditional fragmented landholding has spread this risk.

Fitzjohn's Introduction misses a trick in not attempting to pull together, let alone contextualize on a wider geographical scale, the long-term cultural dynamics of upland occupation in Sicily and Calabria as indicated by old and new research – difficult and incomplete as such a task is likely to be. But the successive chapters do provide scattered clues. In the Palaeolithic, foragers certainly inhabited the Calabrian uplands, but probably in low population levels. During the Neolithic, small rock-shelter and open sites formed a dispersed settlement pattern up to 900 metres above sea level in the mountains of southern Calabria. During the fourth millennium BC Final Neolithic and Chalcolithic, this region continued to be occupied, while settlement spread into the central and northern mountains of Calabria and above 700 metres in the uplands of Sicily. This trend continued into the second millennium Bronze Age, when prominent hilltop settlements, composed of closely packed houses and connected to dramatic underworld burial places, emerged as a strategic settlement form in the uplands of Sicily and Calabria. During the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, site numbers decreased, especially in southern Calabria, but in upland Sicily a smaller number of peak sites, such the ceremonial site of Polizzello located on top of an 877 metre high mountain, emerged as centres, in contrast to coastal cities, and in relation to networks of smaller hamlets extending across hill- and mountain-tops, which themselves subsequently developed into more complex villages. In the 'Hellenistic' phase of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, this settlement trend continued, with the expansion of dominant hilltop centres, such as Monte Polizzo and Salemi, perhaps at the expense of other hilltop towns that were now abandoned. By the Roman imperial period, life in the uplands appears to have been flourishing in areas such as Troina, where 22 survey sites were identified outside the Roman town, ranging from small farmsteads to a substantial villa. Documentary sources then contribute to a more complex picture for the Medieval period, particularly in terms of contested political and religious administration and landownership, with the changing fortunes of prominent hill towns and territories such as Troina and Bova being far better documented than the local histories of villages, farmsteads, field boundaries and long-distance transhumance routes. By the end of the sixteenth century, local communities retained little land that was not under the control of an increasingly small number of landowners, some of whom has also begun to enclose mountainous regions for pasture.

This is what I have gained from reading this book. But when I picked it up, I did expect it to broaden significantly, even challenge, my existing knowledge of upland archaeology, and in this respect I put it down largely frustrated. Despite the fact that the book is entitled 'Uplands of Ancient Sicily and Calabria', and did originate in a symposium on 'Studying Upland Landscapes', the particular significance of the uplands is, for the most part, either completely ignored, taken-for-granted or side-stepped through a preference for terms such as 'inland', 'interior', 'countryside' and 'rural', and by an overriding emphasis on connections and complementarities with coastal lowland communities. More specifically, the local setting of particular sites in the landscape of the uplands is rarely given the detailed consideration it deserves. This problem is compounded by the fact that many of the chapters lack adequate topographic maps. Furthermore, there is plenty of traditional culture-history here, but very little on the past lives, identities and experiences of real people in the uplands. Fitzjohn's 'cognitive approach to an upland landscape' is an exception, albeit focussed on the

present, in that it investigates the landscape perceptions and experiences of the modern inhabitants of Troina, for whom the significance of particular locales is enhanced by memories of the past and experiences of everyday work, social activities and travel. But the insertion of a few throw-away phrases regarding ‘mountain identity’ and ‘mountain culture’ in the conclusion to Ashley *et al*’s chapter does not hide the fact that the rest of this chapter comprises a succession of technical reports that make almost no reference to people or the uplands. When one also considers that this volume is dominated by interim project reports, it is difficult to foresee that it is strong enough to stand the test of time.

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